

# COBBETT'S WEEKLY POLITICAL REGISTER.

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## LETTER I.

TO MR. CANNING,

*On his Manifesto, issued at  
Liverpool, after his late Election.*

London, 4 April, 1820.

SIR,

I find, in the COURIER newspaper, a publication, entitled, "The Speech of Mr. Canning, at the Liverpool Dinner, given in celebration of his Election." It has been published in three several numbers of that paper; \* and, there can be no doubt, that it is looked upon as an official *Manifesto* against the cause of Reform generally, and against the conduct of particular bodies of Reformers.

Secure as you are from all annoyance, while shielded, as a parliamentary speaker; exposed, as every man now must be to fine, imprisonment and banishment, who should venture to answer what you might put forth in the House, this act of yours, this stepping forth in print, and putting yourself on a legal level

\* It is now published in a pamphlet, and placarded most unmercifully. It is unquestionably a *Treasury Favourite*.

with us, is *manly*, at least. It is a *fair challenge*, and, in accepting the challenge, I mean to treat you fairly.

It is impossible to view the Manifesto, as a whole, without receiving the impression, that you, with all your boldness and all your daring, have some qualms, some serious doubts and fears hanging about your mind. You broadly protest against the necessity of *any change*; and yet, we clearly perceive, that you do not think, that things can go on in their present way, and that you see that a *crisis* of some sort or other is at hand. In the outset of the Manifesto you *congratulate* your audience on the complete restoration of order, confidence, reverence for the laws, and a just sense of the legitimate authority of the parliament. And yet, you conclude with an earnest and solemn invocation to that same audience to "see that the *time is come*, at which their *decision must be taken, for, or against* the *institutions of the British Monarchy!*" The struggle, then, is not over, it seems! There is yet, even in your

opinion, a trial of strength to be made; a *crisis* to arrive.

I shall, by-and-by, have occasion to speak fully of the real state of the question, as it now stands, between the Borough-system and the Reformers; but, I will, as nearly as I can, follow the Manifesto according to the order in which it lies before me.

You begin by observing, that it is your duty, as the *representative* of Liverpool, to render an *account of your parliamentary conduct*. I may observe, that you were not standing before the poor creatures, whose *votes* had sent you to parliament, but before the *masters* of those poor creatures. However, as these had, in fact, caused you to have the votes, you might reasonably enough consider them as your constituents. But, when you were to perform your *duty*, in giving an account of your *parliamentary conduct*, how came you wholly to omit to notice the most material part of it? You appear to have been so eager to obtain the praise due to your share of the honour attached to the measures of the *last short session*, that you seem to have forgotten, that there had been *another session*, since your previous election; and a session, too, during which

measures were adopted, which, if not hateful in themselves, were of ten thousand times more importance to your hearers, and to every man of property in the country, than the measures of the last session. We shall by-and-by, see that you had *good reasons* for being silent upon the subject of those measures; but, I will first notice what you say on the subject of the measures, adopted during the last session.

Your words, as to the effect of those measures, are these: "I would appeal to the recollection of every man who now hears me, of any, the most careless estimator, if public sentiment, or the most indifferent spectator of public events, whether any country, in any two epochs, however distant, of its history, ever presented such a contrast with itself as this country in November, 1819, and this country in January, 1820? What was the situation of the country in November, 1819?—Do I exaggerate when I say, that there was not a man of property who did not tremble for his possessions? that there was not a man of retired and peaceable habits who did not tremble for the tranquillity and security of his home? that

“there was not a man of orderly  
 “and religious principles who  
 “did not fear that those prin-  
 “ciples were about to be cut  
 “from under the feet of succeed-  
 “ing generations? Was there  
 “any man who did not appre-  
 “hend the Crown to be in dan-  
 “ger? Was there any man at-  
 “tached to the other branches of  
 “the constitution who did not  
 “contemplate, with anxiety and  
 “dismay, the rapid and, ap-  
 “parently, irresistible diffusion  
 “of doctrines hostile to the very  
 “existence of Parliament as  
 “at present constituted, and  
 “calculated to excite not hatred  
 “and contempt merely, but open  
 “and audacious force, especially  
 “against the House of Com-  
 “mons?—What is, in these re-  
 “spects, the situation of the  
 “country now? Is there a man  
 “of property who does not feel  
 “the tenure by which he holds  
 “his possessions to have been  
 “strengthened? Is there a man  
 “of peace who does not feel his  
 “domestic tranquillity to have  
 “been secured? Is there a man  
 “of moral and religious prin-  
 “ciples who does not look for-  
 “ward with better hope to see  
 “his children educated in those  
 “principles? who does not hail  
 “with renewed confidence the

“revival and re-establishment of  
 “that *moral and religious sense*  
 “which had been attempted to  
 “be obliterated from the hearts  
 “of mankind?”

It is always a proof of con-  
 scious weakness in his cause,  
 when an advocate resorts to mis-  
 representation, exaggeration, and  
 especially when he resorts to  
*cant*; and if the close of this  
 paragraph be not *cant* and *low*  
*cant* too, I know nothing of what  
*cant* is. The leaders of the Re-  
 formers have, by you in particu-  
 lar, been represented as a *despi-*  
*cable* crew, wholly unworthy of  
 any confidence, and having no  
 weight, except with the mere  
 ignorant rabble. How, then, was  
 it possible, that *their* efforts should  
 endanger the *morals* and the *re-*  
*ligion* of the people, and especi-  
 ally of people of property. And,  
 how could the cramping of their  
 operations, the silencing of  
 their tongues and the putting a  
 stop to the movements of *their*  
 pens, cause a “*revival of the*  
*moral and religious sense*”? And  
 how great do you make *them* ap-  
 pear, when you suppose them to  
 have had the power, if they had  
 been suffered to proceed, to *obli-*  
*terate this sense from the hearts of*  
*mankind*?

I do not know, that you do ex-



aggerate, when you say, that there was not, in November, a man of property, who did not *tremble* for his possessions, because every man may well tremble for them now: but I think that you talk insufferable nonsense, when you say, that there was "not a man of moral and religious principles, who did not fear, that those principles *were about to be cut from under the feet of succeeding generations*!" This is, however, nothing more than the old alarmist doctrine. It is precisely what was said by "the *Pilot*" and his jolly crew at the beginning of the late war against France. The nation was called upon to fight for "their *king and their God*," which was much more *blasphemous* than any thing ever published by Mr. CARLILE, or ever even ascribed to any of the Reformers.

To hear you talk, one would imagine, that *morality and religion* were substances, of which men might be *robbed*, as they may of their shoes or coats; something that might be literally *cut away*; and that the Reformers had sharp instruments wherewith to perform the felonious operation. Fertile as your mind is, you have been compelled to resort to plagiarism here; for you have merely re-

peated the ten-thousand-times told tale of JOHN BOWLES and GEORGE ROSE, the latter of whom, in enumerating the items of *value received* by the nation in return for its sacrifices during the war, put at the head, and indeed, it was the main item, the preservation of those "*Blessed Comforts of Religion*," of which the French, had it not been for the war, *would assuredly have deprived us*! Your greater talent has enabled you to wrap the sentiment up and administer it with more art than these bunglers; but, the sentiment is precisely the same. They told us, that, unless we spent our money freely to carry on the war, we should be deprived of our *morals and religion*; the French would *make us Atheists*; we should "lose our *king and our God*." You tell us, that, in order to avoid this same calamity, it was necessary to pass the *six laws*; that it was necessary, amongst other things, to expose every writer in the kingdom to be *banished*.

A *love of religion* has been the pretext for committing the most wicked acts that the world has ever witnessed. The Irish Massacre, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, the horrors attending the repeal of the Edict of Nantz,



the Fires of Smithfield, the Spanish Inquisition, the murdering of the Quakers in New England; in short, what has there ever been done to harrow up the very souls of men, which has not been done under the pretext of a *love of religion*? It has been the great stalking horse of tyranny in all ages; and, it would have been wonderful indeed, if it had been left unresorted to on the present occasion.

But, observe what a reflection you cast on *religion itself*; how you really bring its nature and efficacy into question by asserting, that, by means so contemptible, it was about to be *cut from under the feet of future generations*! Or, in your other, and rather plainer words, to be *obliterated from the hearts of mankind*! Now, suppose a man to say, "Here is a book, which you say is the *word of God*; this word, you say, he has caused to be sent forth for the instruction and salvation of all mankind; there are, in this kingdom, twenty thousand regular preachers of this word, and, at least, thirty thousand more of irregular preachers, that is to say, one preacher to about every 250 souls, and one to about every 120 grown persons.—

"This word is, you say, true upon the very face of it, and carries within it all the proofs of divine origin. The preachers of it are, you say, the most learned, wise, discreet and zealous men, called to the ministry by Divine Inspiration, and are acting under the direction of Divine Influence, in the preaching of this his word, a belief in which is necessary to the salvation of man. This is what you say. Now, I say, that in spite of all this, two or three, or, at most, four or five, *little pamphlets*, written by men of no influence in themselves, and who have scarcely ever been at school, are able to *cut the saving effect of the word of God from under the feet of future generations*, and to *obliterate the word itself from the hearts of mankind*."

Now, suppose a man were to say this. Would he not be thought a most impudent, a most daring wretch. Suppose him to say, in fewer words, "I will, with two or three little pamphlets, 'obliterate religion from the hearts of mankind,' and thus counteract, not only the labours of all the Divines in the world, but the will of God himself." Suppose a man to

say this ; would not you, and would not a Judge, call this a most audacious insult offered unto God himself ; most *horrid blasphemy* ? Yet, this would be saying no more than you, Sir, have yourself said ; for you have said, that the pamphlets of the Reformers were about to “ cut religion from under the feet of future generations ; ” and, again, “ to obliterate it from the hearts of mankind.”

In your anxiety to show the necessity of the *Six Acts*, you overlooked the extent to which your assertions went. In bringing forward the *dangers* to religion, you did not see, that to assert the existence of *danger* to a thing necessarily implies some degree of *weakness* in the thing itself, or in the ordinary means by which it is upheld. A man once, at Philadelphia, went to swear the *peace* against another, whose name was STREET. He did not know, that he must swear, that he was in *bodily fear* of Street. So, when the oath was read to him by the Mayor, he said, he was in *no bodily fear* ; for that he could beat ten such fellows as Street ; and therefore, he would not take the oath. When SHIMMEI was cursing David, one of the followers of the latter exclaimed : “ let me slay him : for, shall this

“ *dead dog* curse my Lord ? And, “ David said : *let him curse on !* ” I have always admired this answer of David. It was becoming of a great man, who *felt strong* in his own character and cause. And, you have done much to dishonour and defame religion in this Manifesto, by asserting it to have been upon the point of being *totally destroyed* by the Reformers, whom you have, a hundred times over, represented as more *despicable*, if possible, even than “ *dead dogs*.”

But, you had the *Six Acts* to defend on the ground of *necessity* ; that necessity could be found only in some great and pressing *danger* ; the danger to *rotten-boroughs*, to *sinecure places*, to *high salaries*, or a mighty *Civil List*, would not have suited your purpose. The danger to *religion* was, therefore, chosen ; but, in your eagerness to prove the *danger* to religion, you wholly forgot, that you were doing all that you were able to do to prove the *weakness* of the thing that you professed to have so anxiously desired to *defend*. I, for my part, say, that none of the acts were necessary, if measures of *relief* had been adopted. I say, that the *miseries*, which produced the discontents, might have been prevented even by the last parlia-



ment. And, as to religion, TRUTH never can be in *danger*, as long as *discussion is free*. I say, that the "*word of God*" can never be rooted out of men's minds, and that the "*will of God*" can never be thwarted by two-penny pamphlets, be they written by Reformers or whomsoever else. I say, that it is to slander our fifty thousand preachers and to insult God himself to assert, as you have asserted, that a few little pamphlets, sent forth by obscure individuals, were capable of thwarting the great scheme of salvation "decreed by God before the foundations of the world were laid." These are my assertions on the subject, and, I think, that every candid man will say, that they are more consonant with a belief in the truth of Christianity than yours are.

I am for relying on the power of religion itself, unaided by the temporal arm. I am for leaving the *word* to make its way, unassisted by the *sword*. I am for leaving *truth* to triumph, without any *sharer* in the triumph. And, I pray, who shows the most confidence in the power of religion, you or I? If what you assert be true, how *humiliated* is religion? Its own intrinsic value and power, are, according to you,

little or nothing. It is a thing, in your view of the matter, that might be "cut from under our feet," or "obliterated from our hearts" by a few pamphlets, while, at the same time, *millions of pamphlets were sent forth for its preservation and propagation*. Besides the exertions of fifty thousand preachers, there were those of the Bible Societies and Tract Societies. Perhaps two hundred, or three hundred, thousand pounds are expended in Bibles and Tracts every year, in this kingdom. Subscriptions for this purpose descend so low as to extract weekly pennies from servant girls. The subject is presented to the people in all the most *enticing* and *amusing* forms. I have sometimes been half tempted to laugh at the ingenuity displayed in the titles of the "Tracts," by which titles the unwary sinner is entrapped into reading, in somewhat the way that is so ably practised by the gentlemen, who send forth invitations to the unfortunate to repair their fortunes by availing themselves of the pecuniary aid offered by the State Lotteries.

Now, supported by all these means, including many millions a year coming in through tythes and other real property, what can



religion have to fear, have or had to fear, from about half a dozen "*illiterate pamphlets*," the most able of which contains, according to the opinion of the BISHOP OF LANDAFF, "*nothing like argument?*" What danger could a religion, "founded on the word of God, and breathing truth in every line," have to fear from such miserable assailants? And, was it possible, that, as a defence against such "*dead dogs*" of enemies, religion stood in need of the *Six Acts*, for the necessity of which you were so strenuously contending?

I wonder, that, when you were making this representation of the dangers you had no misgivings in your mind as to the efficacy of the remedy; since you had only to look back to the days of Bowles and Rose to see, that the former remedy, for the very same alledged evil, had *not succeeded*. If a five and twenty years' war against republicans and irreligion, including seven years of unlimited power of imprisonment; if these had not effected a lasting cure, how could you hope, that the banishment Bill and its associates would produce such cure? True, the country is *tranquil*; but, does that argue that it is *contented*? Men are *silent*: indeed, they hardly ven-

ture to speak freely even in *private*; but, is this a sign of general content or of lasting internal peace? Tranquil as the country is, it is not yet so *tranquil* as *Spain* was only in that very month of November last of which you speak.

What has been stated as the *immediate cause* of the discontents, and of the progress of what you call sedition and blasphemy? What have you and your colleagues, in your own speeches and in speeches from the throne, declared the *cause* to be? Why, the *misery* of the people. This misery, you have said, and you have truly said, disposed the people to listen to those, who traced the misery to *the want of a Reform in the Parliament*. Nothing can be more true than this. It was in vain, that I, during the years from 1804 to 1816, laboured to convince the people, that *misery must, at last, fall upon them*, unless a total change of the system took place. I could obtain no believers, though I had many readers. When I anticipated the consequences of the war, so unnecessarily and so unjustly waged against the United States, even the *Reformers* scouted what I said. My forebodings, when the *peace* took place, were,

not *unpopular*; that is not enough; they were *despised*. But, in 1816, with the shameful defeats of our armies and fleets by the Americans fresh in recollection, and with a diminished quantity of paper-money afloat, with ruin and misery stalking all over the land, I, at once obtained a patient and attentive hearing. Our heads are clear, when our stomachs are empty; and those, who, with full bellies, turned a deaf ear to every warning, listened with both ears and stared with both eyes, in 1816.

Now, granting, for argument's sake, all you say about the dangers existing in November to be true, it is, as stated by yourselves, not less true, that those dangers arose out of the *miseries* of the country. Are those miseries removed? Are they in the way of removal? Can they be removed, without a *great change of system*? If they cannot, what have your *Six Acts* done? The manufacturers say that they must be ruined; so say the merchants and traders; and the farmers, when you meet, are ready to tell you, that they are ruined? Who, then, can say, that he thinks his property *safer* than he thought it in November last? I do not say, or suppose, that you and your colleagues have yet adopted the

scheme of paying off the debt by a confiscation of real and personal property to the amount of one sixth; but, the scheme is afloat; it has been mentioned, as a fit proposition, in parliament; the Ministers expressed no disapprobation; and I am persuaded, that a vast majority of the persons most attached to the government, and approving most decidedly of the *Six Acts*, approve of this scheme. And yet, it is in this state of things, and when every man you meet says, that *something of this sort must be done*, that you congratulate your Liverpool friends on the complete restoration of order, *confidence*, a *reverence for the laws*, and a just sense of the parliament's *legitimate authority*!

"Well Gentlemen," you exclaim, "and what has intervened between the two periods? A meeting of that degraded Parliament, a meeting of that scoffed at and derided House of Commons, a concurrence of those three branches of an imperfect constitution, not one of which, if we are to believe the Radical Reformers, *lived in the hearts*, or swayed the feelings, or commanded the respect of the nation; but which, *despised* as they were while in a



“state of separation and inaction, “did, by a co-operation of four “short weeks, *restore order, confidence, a reverence for the laws,* “and a *just sense* of their own “legitimate authority.”

You might have said as much for Ferdinand, when he returned to Spain; or, he might, as indeed *he did*, say as much, or more for himself. He, in less than two short months, annulled the Constitution, re-established the Inquisition, and plunged into *dungeons*, or *banished*, all those who had distinguished themselves in *asserting the right of the people to be represented*. Having done this he *congratulated* the nation on the complete “restoration of order, of confidence, of reverence “*for the laws*, and a just sense of “his *legitimate* authority.” He made use of the word *paternal* instead of *legitimate*: otherwise his proclamation was almost in the very words of this part of your Manifesto. If men had the courage to write or speak against his deeds, he laid them by the heels in dungeons, he banished them, or put them to death; and having by these means reduced the discontented to *silence*, he assumed that silence was *content*. This is precisely the process that you have adopted in your Manifesto. You assist in

the passing of acts, which produce stillness, and then you congratulate your hearers on the excellent *disposition* of the people to be still! You compel us to hold our tongues; and then you boast of the power of your *persuasion* to produce silence. You pass laws, under the existence of which, nobody, not on your side, can attend at a public meeting but at the hazard of his life; and, then, you exclaim: “See how *quiet* all “is; see what a *reverence for the “laws*, the parliament has *inspired!*” You boast of having assisted in making a law to punish with fine, imprisonment, and banishment, any man, who shall write, or publish, any thing TENDING to bring the parliament into *contempt*; and, when this law has made men afraid to speak of the parliament at all, you congratulate your hearers, on “the *just sense* of the parliament’s “*legitimate* authority” that now prevails, and cite the silence of the trembling press as a proof, that the Reformers were *slanderers*, when they said, that the parliament “*did not live in the hearts “of the people!*” Harry the Eighth, “in his *princely grace*,” condescended to bring LAMBERT to a public controversy with him; but, the king was both *disputant*



and judge. LAMBERT was burnt, and the king cited his condemnation and punishment as an indubitable proof of his having been in error; and, which is curious enough, the tyrant congratulated his people, and put up public thanksgiving to God, that the nation rejected with abhorrence the heresy of Lambert!

I now come to a part of your Manifesto, which is perfectly theatrical. What would I give to have seen you, while you were delivering it, and to have seen the looks of your empty-skulled audience! I allude to your eulogy on the late king, in the following words:

“Another event, indeed, has intervened, in itself of a most painful nature, but powerful in aiding and confirming the impressions which the assembling and the proceedings of Parliament were calculated to produce. I mean the loss which the nation has sustained by the death of a Sovereign, with whose person *all that is venerable in Monarchy* has been identified in the eyes of successive generations of his subjects; a Sovereign whose goodness, whose years, whose sorrows, and sufferings, must have softened the hearts of the most ferocious enemies of the kingly

power;—whose active virtues, and the memory of whose virtues, when it pleased Divine Providence that they should be active no more, have been the guide and guardian of his people through many a weary and many a stormy pilgrimage;—scarce less a guide, and quite as much a guardian, in the cloud of his evening darkness as in the brightness of his meridian day. —That such a loss, and the recollections and reflections naturally arising from it, must have had a tendency to revive and refresh the attachment to Monarchy, and to root that attachment deeper in the hearts of the people might easily be shown by reasoning; but a feeling truer than all reasoning anticipates the result, and renders the process of argument unnecessary. So far, therefore, has this great calamity brought with it its own compensation, and conspired, to the restoration of peace throughout the country, with the measures adopted by Parliament.”

This is a strong instance of shame having no weight on a man's conduct, when he has a great point to carry, and when he knows, that detection and exposure are not near at hand, and especially

when he is speaking to persons, for whose understandings he has the most hearty contempt. To descant in praise of any thing, which the party knows, that no one will dare to condemn, or even to *criticise*, is always mean. It is giving a challenge to fight, to one who has his hands tied. In a case like this, it is an insult to the whole of the people. But, what impudent trash, to say, that the *age*, the *sorrows* and the *sufferings* of the king were calculated to change the opinions of any one with regard to the nature and tendency of *kingly power*! What had that age or those sufferings to do with the general question? What, then, does it make part of the feelings of *loyalty* to be in love with age and bodily affliction? Must we, who would have no confidence in a Judge or a General, under such circumstances, be enamoured with these circumstances, when they meet in the person of a king? We are compelled to hear, in silence, now-a-days, many monstrous propositions, but to be told thus impudently, that the late king afflicted as he, unhappily was, was, even in his last years, a *guide* and a *guardian* of his people, is an affront to our understandings, to express a due degree of resent-

ment at which it is impossible to find words.

One of the arguments, and, indeed, one of the best, against *hereditary* power, whether in the Chief or in any inferior Personages of a government, is, and always has been, the possibility of the power falling into *incompetent* hands, and even falling into the hands of persons afflicted with the *peculiar malady*, with which the late king was afflicted, and which malady, according to the laws and practice of all nations, reduces the afflicted party to a state of complete nothingness in the eye of the law, every thing that he does being considered as if not done at all. This *objection* to hereditary power may, perhaps, be successfully combatted by argument: it may, perhaps, be proved to the satisfaction of some, that there are *benefits* in the hereditary system, which outweigh this *evil*; but, I venture to say, that you, Sir, are the first man that ever dared openly to contend, that the thing was *not an evil*, but was in itself a *benefit*; and, that the knowledge, amongst the people, of its long actual existence, had a natural tendency, on the termination of the calamity by death, to *revive*

and refresh their "*attachment to Monarchy*." If this were really true, what a thoughtless, what a silly and fondling, what a drivelling and ideotic race the people of this kingdom must be; and how well must they merit the scorn and contempt of the rest of the world!

But, really, you could not hazard such a shocking insult and mockery, if you yourself were not blind to what is passing in the world. You could not, even to such men as were *dining you* at Liverpool, have talked in this strain, if you had had much more knowledge of what is passing from month to month in England, than of what is passing in the moon. While you are flourishing away in this style, and looking upon the "*people of property*" as a set of fond, believing, gulls, ready to lay even their bodies down to be trampled under foot out of pure devotion to the system you eulogize, those same people of property are busily engaged in contriving the means of escaping from the consequences of the wreck that they see approaching! It is very curious, but, not more curious than true, and not more true in fact, than natural in motive, that many and many thousands of those, who appear to be,

and who really are, amongst the most zealous and most active in upholding the present system, are amongst the foremost in resolution and preparation to flee from its inevitable consequences. They are like the man, who had been building a wall, and who set his workmen to *hold it up*, while he went to receive and get off with the money.

Do you think, that men, whose all is at stake, who have families to provide for, and who see their means diminishing every day, are to be *won* to their total ruin by high-flying eulogiums such as this of yours? Do you think that you can *enchant* them, as the snake does the silly hedge-sparrow? Do you think, that you can make them in love with poverty? Do you think that, by threatening them with loss of *morals* and *religion*, you can frighten them out of their "*last shilling*?" If you do, you are very much deceived.

Having, by these preliminary tricks, prepared your audience for what was to follow, you proceed to a defence of the *Six Acts*, as you pretend; but, you content yourself with what you deem a defence of *one out of the six*; namely, the act to *put an end to public meetings*. And, how do



you *defend* this act? Why, by denying, that such Meetings as those held last summer and autumn were *legal*! If they were not *legal*, why pass a law to prevent them in future? You had another object here; and that was to give *your* aid to what might be done, or attempted, with regard to those who had taken a leading part at those meetings; and, give me leave to say, that the motive was any thing but fair and manly.

But, on what *ground* was the meeting, at Manchester, for instance, unlawful? Every thing is lawful, which the law does not *forbid*. And, what law forbade that meeting, or any meeting resembling it? The law is a restraint upon man, and *prevents* him from doing certain things. It consists of a set of restraints, not of permissions. No law says positively, that a man shall have liberty to plough his own field; but, he has a right to do it, and the law will protect him in doing it, because there is *no law to forbid* him from ploughing his field. All the people, assembled on the 16th of August, had a right *to be* on the roads and in the square at Manchester, because there was *no law to forbid* their being there. When assembled the legality, or

illegality of their *conduct* was a thing to be ascertained; but, if the *purpose* was not unlawful, and if no unlawful *act* was done after the people were assembled, what was to make the meeting unlawful?

*Custom*, in numerous cases is, and must be law. The terms are, "*whereof the memory of man is not to the contrary.*" And, what can be more wise and just than this? The thing having been so, and been so *without interruption*, for so long a time, it is to be presumed, that it is right, and the maxim further supposes, to be sure, that if not right, men ought to have been *informed of it before*, and not have been suffered to proceed in an error, that might be injurious to them. Suppose I build a house upon a spot, which I can conveniently go from to a town by a foot-path across my neighbour's park, and which foot-path saves me some miles in going to the town. I shall receive great damage by the shutting me out of this foot-path; and, therefore, if I prove the *custom*, my neighbour cannot shut me out, nor is it right that he should; for, I have built my house upon the knowledge of the long custom, and I have, of course, presumed that the custom gave me a right of passing.

Now, as to public meetings, or *assemblies of the people*, they have *always* been customary, in all ages of the country. Not only has *no law ever forbidden them*, but, by fair inference, *the law has allowed them*, not in positive terms, for that was not necessary, but by *forbidding unlawful assemblies, or riots*, for the dispersion of which the law has provided. By this very provision the law really allows of assemblies that are not unlawful; and, to constitute an unlawful assembly, before the *Six Acts* were passed, there must have been *some unlawful act committed after the assembly took place*.

You say, that *such* assemblies have never been declared unlawful *before*; because no *such* assemblies ever before took place. What, do you mean, that assemblies *so numerous* never before took place? This would be worth nothing, if true; but, many and many assemblies equally numerous have taken place at various periods; and especially during the reigns of Charles the Second and of Queen Anne. Nay, down to August last, no man in England appears to have dreamed, that any assembly, however numerous, could be called unlawful, unless it committed some unlawful act. So

far from it, that, in 1817, when so keen upon the scent of sedition, the parliament passed an act to give *a check* to public meetings. No meeting was to be held, unless after *notice given by seven house-holders*. But, not a word was said about *numbers*, or about the *place of residence* of the persons attending the meetings. The fair presumption to be drawn from this act alone is enough to authorize the opinion, that the Manchester Meeting was, in itself, a legal meeting; for this act had *expired*, and the people were at liberty to do whatever they might lawfully do before this act was passed.

To pretend, therefore, that the new act, which confines meetings to parishes, excludes out-livers, puts them under the absolute controul of persons appointed by the Crown, or its Ministers, and deals fine, imprisonment, and death so largely about in all directions; to pretend, that this is *no alteration* in the laws of the land, and that Englishmen are as *free* as they were before the new act was passed, is what could have been done by no man, not wholly regardless of the opinions of the good and discerning part of the nation.

In order to shew, that these

*large* meetings must be intended for *mischief*, you endeavour to show, that they could not be intended for *good*. And, why, because *being so large*, scarcely a hundredth part of the persons assembled could *hear*; and, of course, discussion and deliberation were wholly out of the question. As a question of expediency or of policy you may be right here; but, if inexpedient and impolitic, it does not follow, that *mischief* must be the motive of the meeting. Thousands, however, may put their trust in a few, and may, by their hands held up, give their assent very properly and reasonably to what they do not distinctly understand. We have often seen addresses, approving, not of what the Ministers had done, but of what they *might* do! And, it is very well known, that the far greater part of those, who presented such loyal addresses against the works of PAINE, had never read those works. So that, the assembly being too large for the main part of the persons actually to hear what is proposed for their adoption is neither so foolish, nor so unprecedented as you wish to make it appear to be.

But, that *this* objection to *large* Meetings was not very sin-

cere, we have full proof in another part of the same Bill, to which part you did not think proper even to allude. The Bill allows of Meetings, however large, in *a house*. But, under what restrictions. *No money* is to be paid by those who go to the Meeting *for the use of the house, or room!* Or, if there be, then the keeper of the house must have a *licence*, granted by a Justice, and this may be taken away at the pleasure of the Justice! So that it is clear, that there can be no meeting even *in a house*, unless the parties are on the side of the Government; for, in any other case, no license will, of course, be granted.

Now, if *discussion* and *deliberation* were desired by you and your colleagues and the Whigs (for it is, in this respect, all one), why forbid us to pay for the use of a room to meet in? Our paying would not hurt you; it would not hurt the government; the money would not become seditious and blasphemous. When you talk of the great meetings, you raise a thousand horrid images of tearing down houses and burning towns. None of these have ever happened. But, you say, they *might* have happened. The thing was possible;



and, as there could be no *deliberation*, there could be no good. But, *in a room*, Sir? In a room, there could not possibly arise any pulling down of houses or burning of towns; and there naturally would have been *deliberation*. And yet you will not let us hire rooms to meet in; or, in other words, you will not let us meet even in the rooms!

Away, then, with all your hypocritical, your scandalous pretexts about the danger of large public meetings and their *inutility* for want of a capacity to *deliberate*. The part of the Bill that I have now referred to, and to which you did not choose to allude, clearly shows, that the blow was stricken at all assemblages of the people not under the absolute controul of some one appointed by the Ministers; and it is clear, that your own particular enmity is directed against all free discussion, all free deliberation, all free communication of thought, all free intercourse of mind between man and man; and that, for your part, if you have not openly urged the necessity of adopting a *Censorship*, it is only because you think the same end can be effected by other means.

In looking at your origin, rise, progress, and especially in cen-

templating your great talents, one is astonished at your want of shame in seeming to delight in the success of means so unfair and so truly cowardly. Of the things, which indicate baseness of heart, none is so odious as the employment of tyranny; and of all the kinds of tyranny none is so odious, so truly detestable, as that which compels an opponent in dispute *to hold his tongue*, while the tyrant keeps on speaking, and especially when he keeps up a pretended *discussion* of the point in dispute. If those, who have the power in their hands, say to their opponents, "*hold your tongue: you shall say no more on pain of banishment.*" There, at any rate, they ought to stop. They themselves ought also to be silent. The world ought to be left to judge from what has already been said on both sides. But you, seeing us reduced to silence by the arm of power, go on with the dispute, and argue as if all was left open to free discussion as before.

However, the world is not to be deceived in this way, and the world is in no humour to be deceived. A war, which has reduced this country to ruin, has not done any thing towards final

ly enslaving the world. The whole of the civilized world was, as some hoped, to be reduced to abject slavery for fear that the *example of freedom*, enjoyed in other countries, *should operate to the danger of the Borough System*.—The project has *failed*. That system has, by the late war, been deprived of its power of interference against freedom in other countries; and freedom is again rising its head without any enemy to fear. Who would have believed, five years ago, that so soon as this, the Spaniards, in England, would be crowding to the Spanish Ambassador's house in London, to *swear allegiance to a Constitution very nearly republican*, leaving all mention of the *King* wholly out of the question? Who would have believed, that, in London, there would have been a public celebration of a complete revolution in Spain?—Yet, these things we now behold; and, that man must be infatuated, who can believe, that revolution will confine itself to the territory of Spain. The *Holy Alliance* does not attempt to stir in defence of one of its Members, who has fallen like a leaf in autumn. Let this revolution take only *one step* beyond the boundaries of Spain, and all the work of the twenty-five years war is to begin again!

Still you persevere! Still, you will allow of *no Reform*! Experience has been wholly lost upon you; and, even the present terrific aspect of things has no weight with you. You talk about “the *constitution*,” as if nothing had been done to it during the last thirty years. You know, that we may now be ruined and banished, and even hanged, for doing things which we might *lawfully* have done only a very few years ago; and yet you will have “no *innovation*.” Whatever has been done in this way you do not call “*innovation*.” According to you, nothing is innovation, except what it is wished to have done for the relief and protection of the people.

Your argument against a Reform of the Parliament, or, rather, of the House of Commons, amounts to this: first, *that the Reform, which we demand, would take away the real power of the Lords, and, in effect, reduce the parliament to one assembly*; and, second, *that the parliament, as it is, is good, and that its goodness is proved by its measures and by their effects*.

As to the first, there is a petition now lying before the House of Commons, presented 27 years ago by Mr. Gray, stating that a



*majority of that House is returned by the Peers and their families;* and this petition has never been called up for discussion, and its statements never contradicted. Now, then, according to your mode of arguing, there is, in effect, but *one assembly* at present: and yet you assert, that this is the best possible kind of parliament!

I, for my part, do not see, why the Lords should not retain and exercise their full share of power, and the people have *their House* too. But, if either one or the other must be without legislative power, surely a whole people have a better right to possess the whole of the power than a few families have! You talk of the various modes of election, the various qualifications, and the variety of interests that now exist. But, what are all these better than a show to amuse, if after all, a *majority* of members be sent to the House by the Peers and their immediate connections? And, while this is the case, is it not a *mockery* to talk of *checks* and *balances*, and of "*the democratic part of the Constitution?*" If you were to tell us, indeed, as the late Bishop of Rochester did, that the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them. That the word

*representative* was used merely to flatter fools. That BLACKSTONE, when he says, that the law supposes *every man* to be present in parliament and to give his assent to laws *by himself* or by some *one chosen to represent him*; and, that, on *this ground* and no other, is he *justly amenable to any law*: if you were to say, that BLACKSTONE, when he said this, uttered a falshood, or was drunk, or mad. If you were to tell us this, it would be plain dealing; but, to talk about the *laws of the country*, to talk of these as something to be respected and *reverenced*, and, at the same time to tell us, that they are a mere mockery, is to abuse and insult us.

At another meeting, at Liverpool, during this last trip to that great scene of folly and servility; namely, a meeting of a mass of slaves, calling themselves "*the Back-bone Club*," and who mean, I suppose, that they are "*loya to the back-bone*:" at this meeting you illustrated your doctrine of virtual representation by comparing the whole of the Club to the whole of the people, and by saying that the *members present* were a *fair representation* of the whole of the Club. But, observe, the whole of the Club have *voluntarily and expressly* entered into



the association. Observe, too, that every member of the Club may be *present if he will*, and speak and vote as he pleases. And then observe, that, if the members present do any thing which is contrary to the principles of the Club, the absent members are not bound by it. So that, here is no analogy at all, and your illustration is a piece of miserable sophistry, which you would not have ventured to employ in the hearing of any body, for whose understanding you had not entertained the utmost contempt.

If any one of the Club had had only a very little sense and spirit, he would have answered and said: "Now, Sir, suppose, 'this Club, *self chosen as it is*, 'consisting, as it does, of a set 'of at once *greedy and foolish* 'men, who have not the smallest 'regard for right or justice, 'and whose sole object is to 'look big and live at their ease 'on the fruit of the labour of 'others, and who pretend to 'back-bone loyalty, that being 'the safest mask for them to 'wear; suppose this Club, thus 'constituted and thus animated, 'were to assert, that its members 'were the *true and fair repre-* 'sentatives of the whole of the

people of Liverpool; and suppose, that, proceeding upon 'the ground of this assertion, 'they were to borrow money on 'a mortgage on all the houses 'in the town, and were to send 'round to the people ordering 'them to pay them, daily, large 'sums of money to defray the 'present expences of the Club, 'and also to pay the interest on 'the mortgages; suppose such a 'thing as this, do you believe, 'that the people would be satisfied with these proceedings; 'or, do you not believe, that 'the bones of the *'back-bone Club'* would soon be pretty 'fairly broken?"

If some one had had the sense and spirit to speak thus, what a stare there would have been from the gaping crew. You knew your hearers, and you knew who your readers would be. You relied on their ignorance and on their willingness to be deceived.

Your main object is to instil the notion, that the Reform, contemplated by the Radical Reformers, that is to say, real *personal representation*, a representation of the *people's will*, would *destroy all property*, that is, all the *laws of property*. You say, too, that it would change the nature of the government; but,

this is not an object of terror, on the effect of which you so much rely. The *destruction of property* is the bugbear, on which you place your chief reliance for terrifying. Now, while there is no reason, and while, at any rate, you have *given no reason*, why so unnatural and so monstrous a thing should agree with the *will* of a whole people, we have the grand example of America to prove, that the desire to destroy the laws of property would *not exist*. In America there are thousands of men, worth from a hundred thousand to a million dollars each in property, some real and some personal. These men have no power in elections beyond that of so many day-labourers or journey-men. Yet, in what country upon earth is *property* better protected? And, what is singularly unfortunate for your alarmist argument, is, that the *Common Law* is the same in America as it is here; and that, through all *political* changes, through all the new modelling of *constitutions*, this law has remained. *Why*, then, are we to believe, that *restoring* to the people *their own* House of parliament, would produce a complete oversetting of *all the laws of property*?

Nay, even if you will have us look to the *revolution of France*, you will find nothing to bear you out in your alarming assertion. You will have it, that Reform means *republican revolution*. We deny it; we prove that it does not; your's is *bare assertion*. But, for argument's sake, let us admit it; and, to give you every advantage, suppose it to be republican revolution on the French plan. Now, did that *destroy the laws of property*? Not in the smallest degree. It seized on that species of *public* property, which had been applied to the support of Monks, Nuns, and Parish Priests; and it seized hold of the property of men, who had *quitted the country*, and who were at *war against it*, or who refused to return to it within a limited time. But, what were these latter measures more than the safety of the nation required? And, as to what was called *Church-property*, it was *public* property, and as such it has always been considered, and has always been *dealt with* by the Parliament in this country. As to property *generally*, and as to the laws protecting property, they were never destroyed nor enfeebled, during the whole of the revolution, and were held as sacred under the



*republic* as under the *emperor*. And, which is perfectly notorious, property of every description became *more valuable* and was *better attended* to and held in higher estimation by the people at large, after the fall of the feudal despots and the clergy than it was before. A base and false paper-money almost instantly gave way to gold and silver, agriculture revived, individual comfort and happiness were, after a lapse of centuries, restored to that fine country; and benefits were gained by the people at large, which *never can be lost*, notwithstanding all attempts that may be made to take them away.

What fools, then, must these be, who can be made to believe by your harangues, that to obtain a *real representation of the will of the people* in one of the Houses of Parliament, is to ensure the *destruction of the laws of property*!

While, too, you are holding up this bug bear relative to the *danger to property* from a Reform of the House of Commons, you overlook the dangers that assail *property* from the measures of a House, constituted as the present House is; and yet, I venture to say, that this danger is greater than any that can possibly arise from a Reform.

You forget, that a considerable portion of people's real estates were *actually taken away* by what was called the "*redemption of the land tax*." And, that, as to the Church Property, a portion of it was then taken away and transferred into lay hands, *without a possibility of its return to the Church*. This, you will say, was a case of *necessity*; but, may not the *whole* of the Church Property be taken away upon the same plea? Aye, *may* it; and he is a bold man, who shall assert, that it *will not*, before this grand financial struggle come to a close.

Talk, indeed, of *danger to property* from a Reform, when without a Reform we have seen an Order in Council annul all the laws of property, relative to the countless millions owed by the Bank, and when we have seen those who issued and who dared to act upon that Order *protected by a bill of indemnity*, but (which, indeed, swallows up every other consideration as to safety to property), is not *all property mortgaged* by the late Parliaments to pay the interest of money borrowed by them, or under their authority? And are there not *now*, at this moment, schemes before the public, and schemes coming from "*loyal Back-Bones*,"



too, to seize on a *sixth part* of every man's estate, personal as well as real, in order to *pay off the Debt, contracted by former Parliaments?* And is not this measure represented as *necessary to save the nation from actual ruin and general starvation?* A Reformed Parliament might, possibly, have some schemes of a *wildish* nature; but could they really *do* any thing *more* dangerous to property, to the safe and quiet enjoyment of property, than what has *been done* by unreformed Parliaments? It appears to me, that, in this respect, we are in this happy situation, that, let the change be what it may, it *cannot be for the worse*. And this, without going a step further, is I think, a pretty good answer to your assertion, that the present mode of constituting the Parliament ought to be regarded as good, because its *fruits have been so excellent!*

However, there are *other fruits*, which in answer to your assertion as to the goodness of the present system, ought to be noticed. When we are speaking of the *power* of a nation, we ought to speak, in the first place, of power likely to be *permanent*: and, in the next place, we ought to speak of it in *relation* to the power of rival nations. Our power,

such as it was at the close of the war against the French nation, is apparently, *gone already*. It appears to have been purely the effect of a *money operation*. It was obtained by *loans*: and, not only have the loans ceased; but the repayment is pressed for in vain, and to pay the interest produces confusion and misery. The power, therefore, was nothing more than an *illusion*. There was nothing real in it: it is gone: and the measures used to obtain it for the moment, have left the seeds of feebleness and death behind them.

But, has there arisen no *new power*, elsewhere, out of those self-destroying efforts of England? Can you see ground for alarm in half-a-dozen two-penny pamphlets, and no ground for alarm in the power of the *American States?* Perhaps it is for *our* good, because for the good of mankind, that you and your colleagues and the parliament should be and continue *blind* as to this object. You imagine, perhaps, that the last war against that country was no fair trial of strength. Indeed it was not; for the advantages were all on *your side*. You were prepared; you had immense fleets ready fitted out; you had armies on foot; all were

flushed with victory, and all, whether justly or unjustly, covered with renown. The ground of the war had *ceased of itself*: the enemy *sued for peace*; if ever that enemy *could fear*, he feared then; his finances were embarrassed, and a spirit of party prevailed, and took a very dangerous direction. Yet, after spending about *seventy millions of money*, you retired from that war, making peace upon the very terms that the enemy himself had proposed long before; and you retired with *defeated armies*, and what was a great deal more portentous, with *defeated fleets*. The shouts of victory which had been heard on the banks of the *Serpentine River*, were answered by the Republican cannon on the lakes, on the ocean, in Canada, and at New Orleans.

Now, it is this *new maritime power* that I wish the English nation to look at, if you will not look at it. It is a power very different indeed from any in Europe. It is a power singularly constituted, and arising out of means, with the full extent of which you all seem to be wholly unacquainted. It is attendant upon *great ambition*: but, ambition, too, of a singular cast, never under the guidance of pas-

sion, and wholly inaccessible to the influence of intrigue.

This power has been created by the *unreformed parliament* of this kingdom; and, what ought never to be forgotten, it arose, it had its *very birth*, in a contest for the *right of representation*. It was the refusal of that right to the Americans; it was the insisting upon the right to *tax them without their consent*; it was this that first made them think of a separation. So that from this root *all* our evils have sprung; and yet you cherish this root with as much care and zeal as if it were the obvious and only means of our salvation.

You conclude by saying, that *you will not deceive us*; that you will give us *no real reform*; that, if you disfranchise Grampound, it is to *save Old Sarum*; and that the Whigs are of the same opinion. This is frank; and, with like frankness, I tell you, that I care not a straw about the disfranchisement of Grampound; or, about any thing, relating to any reform, short of what we have contended for. So that, here we are, completely at issue: you refuse every part, and I ask for the whole.

The question, therefore, now is, *how long* you will continue in this tone of bold defiance. Your words are, I am convinced, bolder than



your *thoughts*. Nor are you the *only* man, even amongst the Ministers, who has any thing to say, as to this great question ; and, as to the things, which are finally to influence the decision, they are, as most men begin to think, and as I well know, much more of a *financial* than of a *political* character. Indeed, you, in the midst of your confident assertions and bold denials, betray your *doubts* and *fears*. All would seem smooth before you ; the jails are full of writers and publishers ; the press is at your feet ; scarcely a man seems to *wish* to oppose you, or even to complain of you. A docility and a tameness prevail such as never were witnessed in this country before ; and yet you are far from being free from *apprehension* ! Indeed your apprehensions seem to be greater than they were, or were ever thought to be, *at any former period* ! For, in your speech at “ the Canning Club,” which speech makes a part of your *Manifesto*, you make the following alarmist appeal to your hearers :

“ Gentlemen, the times when I first came amongst you were times *portentous and awful*, and big with the fate not only of England, but of the world. But the dangers and the difficulties

“ of those times created in us an *animating spirit*, which nerved our arms and steeled our hearts to oppose and overcome them. The *dangers and the difficulties of the present times* are of a different character ; and, whilst they threaten *the existence of all that is dear to us*, the struggle which we have to sustain is one in which there is not the *same wholesome animation*, because it is with antagonists who *dare not face the day* ; and the victory, when achieved, is void of exultation, because it is over those who ought never to have been other than our friends.— But, gentlemen, it is against the *same spirit*, though exhibited in different forms, though wielding different weapons,—it is against the same spirit that we contended abroad for our own safety and that of Europe, and are *contending now for our political existence at home* ; a spirit then as now adverse to rational freedom ; a spirit then as now hostile to national tranquillity ; a spirit then as now seeking to subvert society itself, by separating the elements of which it is composed and setting them in array against each other ; and to undermine the foundations of man’s happiness in this



"world, by destroying his hopes  
 "of an hereafter.—Were I to have  
 "my choice, I confess I would  
 "rather have to contend with this  
 "spirit embodied and armed—I  
 "would rather cross the sea to  
 "combat it, whether on the plains  
 "of the Peninsula, or on the field  
 "of Waterloo, than have to guard  
 "against it here, in the various  
 "disguises of affected philanthro-  
 "py and fanatical reform, in which  
 "it is to be found every day at  
 "our elbows and by our firesides."

This last is a very high flight, indeed! What! you are to be the "*young Burke*" I suppose! You will not indulge even philanthropy! You will have no schools even. You will have us go back even to the law of *soccage* and that of *escuage*. What a pity that the *Curfew* should have been abolished; that excellent institution of "*Social Order*!" The French peasant is, alas! no longer bound to watch all night in the neighbouring marshes, to keep the frogs silent, during the time of the lying-in of the Lord of the Manor's wife! Ah! Sir, these are sad times! This reading and this writing will be the total ruin of "*Social Order*:" they will make the "*Lower Orders*" think, that even Lords have no more than two eyes in their head, and that they

have only eight fingers and two thumbs. Oh! that Harry the Eighth, who brought the pegs and wires of the Monks and exposed them at Charing Cross! It was he who began the mischief. Had it not been for him, we might still have been crawling upon our hands and knees round the shrine of Thomas a Becket, and might have been giving up our dinners to stuff the wallets of the holy mumpers that would have taught us the true principles of "*Social Order*."

However, what wise men generally do, is, to yield to the force of events, as sailors, in contrary winds, shift their sails and change their course. If what you say be true, nothing more need be said by us, not a single word more, in favour of reform, or, at least, of some great change of system; for, if, after fighting twenty-five years against "*THIS SAME SPIRIT*," and contracting our terrible Debt in order to carry on the fight; if, after all this, we are still, by this same spirit, "*threatened with the total loss of all that is dear to us*;" if we have still to "*struggle for our political existence*;" if these assertions be true, is it not fair to presume, that you have pursued a wrong course, or, that the thing, fought against, is not a

thing to be subdued by any means that you have the power of putting in motion?

It is a little too impudent to declare, with the *six acts* before our eyes, that your "*antagonists dare not face the day.*" Poor fellows! they cannot; for, as to the greater part of them, they are already literally shut completely away from the rays of the sun. But, I allow, and it is with joy that I feel, that you and your adherents have not the *animating motives* that you had *during the war*. There was then *gain* at every step. There were *loans, contracts, promotions* and every other sort of inducement to sally forth against "*this same spirit.*" All these "*animating*" inducements are now wanting. It is very true, that the struggle you and your adherents have now to sustain has not this same "*whole-some animation*"; because, as you truly say, "*the victory, when achieved, is void of exultation;*" not, however, "*because it is over those who ought, on your terms, never to have been other than your friends*"; but because, it is over those, *whose friends, on their terms, you ought always to have been*; whose friends, consistently with honour, and with fidelity to

the king, you *always might have been*; and whom you have not had the honesty and courage *fairly to meet as foes.*

You almost make me laugh, when you say, that you would rather "*cross the sea to combat this spirit in the Peninsula, or on the field of Waterloo.*" I dare say you would, indeed! Another war for "*Social Order,*" and another *Embassy to Portugal,* would not be unpleasant things. But, how often must you be told, that another war would demand *another thousand millions of money*; and that these are not to be had? Oh! no! That game is over. That dragon has had his teeth knocked out. The Public will not fail to observe, that, you do not talk about *crossing the Atlantic to combat this same spirit*"; and, yet, all your Herculean labours would be vain, unless you defeated it *there*. It is that country that is the signal of encouragement and the anchor of hope to all those whom you wish to destroy. It is that country which enables us to laugh at Holy Alliances and all sorts of machinations against the liberties of mankind. It is that country, which (as I once before observed) is the ring in the nose, the gravel in the teeth, the thorn in the side



the whip on the back, the bridle in the jaws, the terror, the hatred, of every despot, or would-be despot in the world. This you know well; and yet you say not a word of crossing the *Atlantic* to "combat this same spirit." However, if you really be so eager for a corporal contest, the "*Peninsula*" does, just at this time, present a scene that must awaken your "*animating*" desires and views! Better go and try your luck there, since you find things so hopeless here. You will hardly succeed in getting back the *Curfew*; whereas you may possibly help to restore the Inquisition, that most famous of all the "*ancient and venerable institutions of Social Order.*"

The *consolation* that you draw from the dangers which you state to exist is curious enough: it is, that all men will, at once, *take their sides*, for or against, the dangerous principles of which you have been speaking; and that there will be *no neutrality*. What a talk of *struggling* is here at the end of a five and twenty years war against these same principles! One would wonder what could fill you with such *alarm*. One would wonder what could leave any thing like *doubt*, in your mind, as to the issue of a

contest, which seems to be decided, the combatants on one side being all laid by the heels, or gagged, and, those on the other side, having nothing in the world to do but to receive the thanks of the rich and the loyal! What is there, then to *alarm* you? Where is the *danger*, where the *difficulties*, to which you are everlastingly recurring?

Why, the truth is, that you know of dangers and difficulties, of which you have not the courage to speak, and the very thought of which, if it occur during dinner, spoils your appetite; and to think of which cheers us in moments of the deepest gloom. The Debt; the Debt! The Taxes! The question between the *Land and the Funds*! This it is that fills you with alarm. You must know, a man almost an idiot, or, which is nearly the same thing, sublimated up into an attachment to the *Curfew*, and to the *Frog-law* of France; even such a man, placed where you are placed, must know, that this question *between the Land and the Funds* must be agitated, discussed, and settled. I, for my part, though very eager for a *Radical Reform*, have always relied for success upon the inevitable effects of the agitation of this question. I will here cite



a passage from the Register of 28th of October, 1815. The war was, at that time, just closed by that memorable act, the sending of Napoleon to St. HELENA. Oh! what exultation! I, about that time, concluded an address to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in these words. "Thus will the depression be felt through all the veins of the community; and thus will you experience a degree of embarrassment, which that bold botherer PITT, never had to encounter. He got over the stoppage of cash-payments at the Bank by reports of committees, subscribing combinations, false alarms, and divers other devices, calculated to deceive a people full of fear of the enemy, and easily duped, from their natural credulity. But, your's is a case that can receive no aid from trick and contrivance. It is not now a question of jacobin or anti-jacobin: it is no question of alarm: no question about religion or government; no Yeomanry Cavalry, Loyal Associations, or Volunteer Corps will now avail. No appeals from the forum or the pulpit will be of any use. It is not a matter of seditious and treasonable practices. It is not a question

of passion but of money. The means that would put down a thousand market mobs will now avail nothing. Majorities and minorities are here out of the question. No acts of parliament or proclamations; no Societies for the Suppression of Vice; no Lancaster Schools, no Bible Associations, will do any good."

And, is not this really the case? The *Six Acts* are passed. The press is nearly silent, except as far as *praise* goes. We cannot meet freely to speak to each other, even in a room. If we say that which may TEND to bring the parliament into contempt, we may be banished for life. Soldiers are every where on foot. All seems complete; and yet you have apprehensions! Yet you talk of a struggle for all that is dear to us! Yet you think the combat more full of horrors than a five-and-twenty year's war! The only real struggle is that which is to take place between the Land and the Funds, with which I hope that no reformer will ever meddle, any further than just to see fair play!

You talk in a very gothic style about the venerable attributes of the kingly and lordly powers. You seem to shudder at the idea

of any thing having a *levelling* tendency. You are shocked at the progress of reform and even at that of philanthropy. It is strange, that so profound a political philosopher should have overlooked the progress of the notions of '*Change Alley!*' My opinion is that the kingly, and especially the *lordly*, part of the constitution has more to dread from the long use and the now complete adoption, of the phrases: "*National-Debt; Public-Debt; Public-Creditor; Funded-Property; National-Mortgage; Public-Faith;*" my real opinion is, that the nobility have more to dread from these phrases, and from the reasonings naturally proceeding from them, than they would have to dread from the full execution of even the *wishes* of the most Radical of the Radical Reformers.

It is whimsical enough to hear your rabble-rousing harangues about the *poison* diffused through half a dozen two-penny pamphlets, and these now suppressed; and talking of the loss of comfort in this world and of salvation in the next, from a cause so contemptible; to hear you, in a tone so solemn cry out against this paper-war in miniature against all that is sacred in the Monarchy and all this noble and venerable in the aristo-

cracy, while you wholly overlook the dry and cool calculations of those who are for crying *snacks* in the Parks and the Chases. These gentlemen have sitten down with pen, ink and paper on the table; have calculated the worth, in *fee simple*, of all the lands, fisheries, mines, canals, purlieus, outlets, easements, waters, and water-courses; and of all the houses and all the live stock and moveable goods. Having made their valuation of the whole, they next ascertain the sum they want for the fundholders, and taking this as a *divisor*, to work they go, very likely upon a slate, in order to save paper. The matter appears, indeed, to be quite settled; and, in a few months, we may expect to see the *surveyors*, with their chains, and the *valuers* of houses and goods, tramping about from one nobleman's estate to another. All this you can see going on, without any apparent alarm at all; and yet you are frightened out of your life, or, at least, out of your senses, at the thought of danger to Old Sarum!

Talk of *levelling notions*, indeed! What do you think of the notion of every man, who holds a bit of scrip, that he has a *mortgage* upon every lord's estate? Yet this is a general notion, and, according



to the language of your colleagues, it is a *just* notion. Nay, it really seems to be time to take this side of the question. The other side is unpopular, and the Reformers would be fools indeed to hazard becoming unpopular for the sake of their oppressors.

And, Sir, whence has all this danger arisen? Not from any thing done by the Reformers; but from a war, carried on for twenty-five years for the purpose of *preventing Reform*. That was the cause of the Debt, the Debt is the cause of the danger. I grant, that to go to war, in 1793, was a good way to prevent reform at that time. It was effectual for its purpose. But, then, the war produced the cause of that misery, which must produce the reform at last. The question of reform had to be resumed, as soon as peace was made, and resumed, too, under circumstances, a thousand times more disadvantageous to the Borough-holders, who had then the Debt hanging about their necks, while the reformers stared them in the face.

Liverpool has long been the favourite theatre of your half-official publications. In 1814, when the combined armies, paid by England, had overcome Napoleon,

you made a grand display of this same kind, at that same town, and the task of answering you then, as now, fell upon me. You then, in the hour of military victory, and fancied permanent triumph over freedom, cited the success of the Russians as a proof that a country stood in no need of political freedom in order to insure her defence against invaders and to insure the attachment of a people to their government. I then reminded you, that you *had not yet seen* the effects of the taxes raised and the loans made, in England, to prevent political liberty. I then told you, that the war had ended abroad; but, that the cost of it had *to be settled for at home*. In short, you and your colleagues and all those who hold the Boroughs, thought, in 1814, that all was at an end as to reform. That question you thought was *set at rest for ever*. You thought, that your great object was secured, and you gave yourselves little trouble about the Debt, the Taxes, or any thing else. There was only *one* thing that remained to be done; and that was, *to root out freedom in America*; and though we know, and we reformers rejoice, that the enterprize failed in its object, I cannot con-

clude this letter, long, and much too long as it already is, without particularly adverting to the circumstances, under which, and the obvious view with which, that enterprise was undertaken.

The only subject of dispute between America and us was the impressment of seamen on board her merchant ships by our ships of war. These acts could take place only when we were *at war with some third power*. Therefore, when Napoleon had been put down, and we had made peace with France, the Americans, who had always been eager to make peace, renewed their applications for this purpose, but, were *put off* from time to time, with one excuse and another. During this time of apparent dilatoriness, we, however, were preparing all the means of a furious attack upon the most valuable ports of America. At last, out came a sort of *Declaration from the Lords of the Admiralty to the Fleet*. Quite a novelty in point of title, and very clear in its object. In this curious document, very much in the style of Napoleon when addressing his army, the sailors are told, that some of them are still wanted to carry on the war against

the Americans, and, in the conclusion, that their Lordships do not doubt that they, in co-operation with the army, will soon bring the war to a conclusion, that will be "*conducive to the LASTING REPOSE OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD.*"

This was very uncommon language for the Government to address to *sailors*, who, indeed, had never addressed sailors or soldiers before. This declaration, issued under the names by the Lords of the Admiralty, was dated *on the 30th of April, 1814*. It was put forth in *May*; and, on the *2d of June* SIR JOSEPH YORKE, then one of those *very Lords* of the Admiralty, said, in his place, in the House of Commons, that, "although *one* great enemy of this country, Bonaparté, had been *deposed*, there was another gentleman, whose *deposition also was necessary to our interest*; and, *with a view to that deposition*, a considerable naval force must be kept up, especially in the Atlantic." I noticed and re-published this speech at the time. I, in all sorts of ways, called for a contradiction of it, if not correct. But none ever appeared.

In the meanwhile the ministe-



rial news-papers urged the absolute necessity of carrying on the war, "until we had destroyed *the only remaining successful example of democratic rebellion.*" And, they said, that unless this were effected, *no legitimate government could ever exist in safety.* Therefore, there can be no doubt in the mind of any rational man, that the intention was *to destroy the American Government; to throw that country into confusion; and, if possible, to split it up, and, perhaps, conquer and hold a part of it.*

History has a claim to these important facts. Our grand-children should read them, that they may rejoice at the failure of the enterprize, and that they may honour the brave people, who thus preserved expiring freedom. —If *that* enterprize had succeeded, you would, indeed, Sir, never again have been troubled with the subject of Reform. The whole of the civilized world would have sunk, for ages, per-

haps, beneath the hoof of despotism. The rebuff, the defeat, that you received beyond the Atlantic, kept the head of freedom up in Europe. There was still a spot left for free men to inhabit. There was still an asylum for the oppressed. There was still in existence a most enchanting example of successful resistance of oppression. The Reformers in England got time to breathe. The peace soon discovered the evil consequences of the war. Misery began her howl before the shouts of glory had ceased. The stunned nation began to recover its senses, to open its eyes, to rouse itself, to look into the causes of its sufferings, to see that these proceeded from heavy taxation, that that proceeded from a lavish expenditure, *and that that had arisen from a want of reform.* Back, at once, it came to the old question again; this question was revived under circumstances peculiarly disadvantageous to our enemies; they were beaten out of the field of argument, and they

resorted to those means of defence of themselves and of punishment of us, against which means truth and talent and virtue are wholly unavailing. Thus stands the matter at this moment. The reformers are not in motion; but they are not subdued. You know they cannot stir; but yet you dare not say that you have gained a victory over them. *Time* must be the arbiter; they do not fear this arbiter, and you do. There is, I hope and think, yet room for *conciliation*, but, as you expressly declare, that *you* will not yield an inch, and, as you probably speak with authority, to time and events the question must be left.

I now, Sir, take my leave, with just observing, that though you have been amongst the foremost to decry, and to impute bad motives to, those who have taken pains, by *placards* and other means, to cause their productions to be widely circulated, it has been remarked, that no author ever

employed these means with more liberality than you have in the promulgation of the *Manifesto*, to which I have here endeavoured to furnish a suitable answer.

With high admiration of your great talents, but with sorrow at seeing them so zealously exerted in so bad a cause, and with mortification and shame at seeing *you* justify cowardly barbarity under the hypocritical pretext of anxiety for "*morals* and *religion*,"

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

And most humble servant,

WM. COBBETT.

P.S. Sir, in the above Letter, long as it is, I have left wholly untouched some of the most interesting topics. I shall, therefore, address a *Second Letter* to you, relating more particularly to those, who promised to *spend their last shilling* and to *die in the last ditch*, and at the head of whom you now appear to have placed yourself.



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